

# **Be a Star**

## **Brief Program Description**

Be a Star was developed to help preadolescents gain the knowledge and skills needed to resist drugs. Be a Star was developed to build on the after-school activities already in place at the United Church Neighborhood Houses (UCNH). The neighborhoods served by the UCNH include areas where gang activity is high, where children experience high rates of abuse and neglect, where proportionately large numbers of families receive AFDC, and where the high school dropout rate is 52 percent. The agency has responded to community needs by developing after-school programs for neighborhood youths and providing a day camp during the summer. Tutoring is available at most centers, one has a day care facility, and several have thrift shops. All work with other community agencies to coordinate the minimal services available to neighborhood residents. In addition to the after-school activities, support groups for parents were developed and centers were encouraged to work closely with community residents to place greater emphasis on a safe environment for children.

The evaluation employs a quasi-experimental design. Approximately half of the groups are treatment groups, and the other half are comparison groups. The treatment groups receive the specially designed curriculum. Comparison groups use a more traditional curriculum that focuses on holidays and games.

## **Program Strategies**

The after-school groups which serve children between the ages of 5 and 12 are designed to (a) improve decision making skills and interpersonal competence, (b) improve cultural awareness and self-esteem, and (c) increase unfavorable attitudes toward alcohol and drug abuse.

The groups were planned to include at least three segments: a physical activity period, a discussion period, and a craft activity. The activity period included free play and structured games and occurred when children first arrived from school. The discussion period focused on the topic of the group. Topics for the group included how to make and be a friend, how others make me feel, how to feel good about choices I make, what I want to be, and how I can take pride in the accomplishments of others. The third segment of the groups was making a craft or snack (although there is always a snack).

## **Population Focus**

Be a Star served African-American children, between the ages of 5 and 12, living in the city of St. Louis.

**Suitable Settings**

The program can be administered in neighborhood community centers.

**Required Resources**

A curriculum which includes modules on decision making, cultural awareness, personal competency, and alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs education have been developed for the groups. The drug awareness modules have been developed by the National Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

**Implementation Timeline**

The children attend after-school groups once a week from September through May, when school is in session. Group sessions last 90 minutes. In the 1994-95 project year, the average number of sessions attended by the children was 22.3. Accordingly, the average dosage was 33.5 hours (22.3 X 90 minutes = 2007 minutes or 33.5 hours) per child.

**Outcomes**

Evaluation of this program revealed the following:

- In every case, the treatment groups had higher scores than the comparison groups on twelve of the sixteen subscales of the Revised Protective Factors Index. These subscales included family bonding, self-concept, self-control, and self-efficacy.
- On the knowledge-based test for the 5-6 age groups revealed that children in the treatment group were significantly more likely than children in the comparison group to recognize Nairobi and know the meaning of "911."

**Contact Information**

For indepth information on this program, please use the contact listed below.

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